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Fulbright Hits U. S. on Viet Peace

We have long had a great deal of respect for Sen. J. William Fulbright, Arkansas Democrat, who heads the upper house foreign relations committee, but we find ourselves unable to go along with him in his criticisms of the Johnson administration's foreign policies, particularly with regard to Viet Nam. However, we do feel he has a strong argument when he says the defense department is exercising "tremendous power" in shaping these policies.

As chairman of the powerful senate committee on foreign relations, Mr. Fulbright is entitled to an attentive ear when he dwells on the manner in which our government handles foreign affairs all over the world. As a member of the ruling majority party in congress, the Arkansas senator's critical opinions of President Johnson's dealings with the Communists in Southeast Asia, per se, carry lots more weight than partisan views if expressed by Republicans, which hasn't been the case since GOPers on Capitol Hill have strongly supported L.B.J.

What has led to the current schism between the forthright Arkansas senator and the White House was Mr. Fulbright's criticism Sunday in a television-radio interview not only of the danger of the defense department's influence becoming dominant due to its huge budget, but also his charge that U.S. suspension of the bombing of North Viet Nam for four days was too short a period to provide a test of reaction to this country's peace efforts.

In addition to singling out the defense department and its secretary, Robert S. McNamara as a target because of the "great persuasive powers" it possesses because it is armed with spending powers representing almost half the national budget, Mr. Fulbright paid his "respects" to the Central Intelligence Agency, which he declared should not have a strong voice in foreign policy because it is supposed to be an intelligence, not an operating agency in such affairs.

The Arkansas senator reiterated his suggestion that bombings of North Viet Nam be suspended for a "more reasonable length of time" to see if such a move would contribute toward bringing about negotiations for a settlement of the conflict. He did not spell out what he regards as reasonable time but it is believed he is thinking in terms of a few weeks, rather than the lull of four or five days last May.

Mr. Fulbright said he wanted to make it clear that President Johnson is running this country's foreign policy, but he added there is no doubt the defense department has great influence. "Because of the enormous amount of business they (the defense department) do, this is a tremendous power they have and we have to be very careful it isn't a dominant one."

As well as being critical of Viet Nam peace efforts, the foreign relations chairman defended his right to criticize the administration's foreign policy in relation to its intervention in the Dominican Republic.

"But," he complained, "this country's gotten to the point where if you

The White House quickly dismissed the new proposal of Sen. Fulbright for a longer lull in North Viet Nam bombings in order to encourage peace negotiations. President Johnson realizes that obviously he has failed to list the Arkansas senator in the consensus he seeks on foreign policy and he is resigned to expect further criticisms from him in this field.

Mr. Johnson's answer to the latest Fulbright proposal as relayed to the press by his secretary, Bill D. Moyers, was that the plan has been tried before and hasn't worked. Mr. Moyers said that if there were any sign it would spur peace talks, the President would order another halt.

He declared there was no indication at this point that any such action would bring the Communists to the negotiating table. Meanwhile, some of the best informed U.S. officials believe there are probably serious policy differences among North Vietnamese leaders over entering into peace talks with the United States. Persistent reports of developing differences between Communist North Viet Nam and Red China are being carefully examined in Washington for possible future bearing on the future trend of Hanoi's war policy.

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